

Revolution and Education in Late Nineteenth Century France: The Early Career of Paul Robin

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IN THE ORTHODOX, "Whig" interpretations of the history of education of nineteenth-century France the focus of attention has traditionally been on the triumph of free, obligatory and secular education. (1) In recent years historians have attempted to provide a more balanced picture by also chronicling the activities of the "losers" in this confrontation—the defenders of religious education. (2) But one group has been left out of both accounts—the propagandists for a working-class education free of the interference of both the Catholic Church *and* the capitalist state. Of this latter group of thinkers the most interesting was Paul Robin, not simply because his views were the most radical, but because for over a decade this educational anarchist controlled an institution in which he could test his theories in practice. The purpose of the following account of Robin's work is first to illustrate the links that bound together the sexual, political and educational concerns of the libertarian left and secondly to show how deeply rooted in the past century are the current debates regarding the education of women and workers.

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On the rare occasions when Paul Robin is mentioned by historians he is usually characterized as having early in life abandoned politics for his sexual and educational campaigns. (3) His contemporaries made the same charge. But Robin's response was that all his activities were part of the struggle for the social revolution. In fact one of the fascinating aspects of his life is that it reveals that late nineteenth-century politics were still very much in a state of flux. It was, for example, still a moot point whether socialists would consider sexual and educational questions as central to the revolutionary agenda. In the end such concerns were relegated to the side-lines and a man like Robin who began his political life at the center of international socialist activity would end up on its periphery. It was not so

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much that he had abandoned socialism as it was that socialism had sloughed off some of its early concerns. Robin was not completely isolated; he is best understood if seen as linking the mid-nineteenth century, pre-Marxian, moralistic radicalism of Proudhon with Pelloutier's and Sorel's late nineteenth-century syndicalist critique of socialism's loss of idealism.

Robin's chief claim to fame as a member of the First International was based on the fact that he was dramatically driven out of the General Council in 1871 at the behest of Karl Marx. Seven years previous there had occurred in St. Martin's Hall in London the original meeting of British and French trade union representatives. The International Workingmen's Association that emerged as a result had a General Council in London which acted as a coordinating body for the five national groupings of the membership. Marx served as the secretary of the Council but the International was far from being a revolutionary body; indeed most members were not even socialists. Its initial support came from stolid British trade unionists with the balance of power only slowly shifting to more radical continentals. The most vociferous were the French; they were dominated, not by Marx but by a Proudhonian suspicion of the church, the state and politics in general. (4) Proudhon (who died in 1866) was a mutualist, a defender of small units of production, and his followers' suspicion of "collectivism" in both economic and educational matters was to emerge repeatedly. By 1868 the Brussels' congress of the International did succeed in voting a resolution which called for collectivization but its full implications were deliberately left as vague as possible. What eventually drove the International towards more radical positions was the coercive repression by the continental governments of the waves of strikes of the late 1860s. The violence done to strikers by French and Belgian troops led to calls for a new militancy. Marx's response was to seek to win the International's support for a campaign of *political* action directed by the General Council. But this tactic was opposed by Bakunin and others on the grounds that the goal of the socialist movement was to dismantle the state, not create a new one. It is a simplification to refer to this clash as a contest of Marxists against anarchists. The term "anarchist" was only first used as an epithet against opponents of the General Council in 1872. And "Marxist" was likewise employed as a pejorative by opponents of the General Council to describe those adhering to the secretary's line. (5) Neither term at first referred to simple theoretical differences. What were at issue were practical considerations of who should command—Marx or Bakunin.

Robin became involved in the quarrel as an associate of Bakunin. In 1868 the Russian, in order to wrest from Marx the direction of the International, sought to have his own Alliance de la Démocratie Socialiste admitted into the larger organization en bloc. (6) The General Council

refused to permit the entry of this Bakuninist Trojan horse but individual sections were allowed to affiliate, and in Geneva the Bakuninists controlled the International's publication, *L'Égalité* from which they sniped at the pretensions of the General Council. (7) Robin won Marx's disfavor by writing such editorials in the fall of 1869. Robin was not part of a Bakuninist plot but simply unbraided the Council for seeking to extend its powers. Nevertheless Marx so read the situation, and Robin in exile in London in 1871 found himself the scapegoat of the Secretary's campaign to drive the Bakuninist faction out of the International. (8) Under Marx's guidance the London conference of 1871 condemned "political passivity", and Robin who could best, though anachronistically, be called a "cultural revolutionary" was drummed out of the General Council. It would be misleading to imply that Robin espoused original and important political arguments. At bottom the simple reason for his expulsion was that he was viewed by Marx as a representative of Bakunin.

Why was it that a socialist like Robin should have held politics, in the restricted sense of the term, in contempt and devoted himself to an understanding of the oppression created by educational and sexual power? Like so many other early socialists Robin came from a good middle-class background. (9) He was born in 1837 in Toulon to a Catholic family whose members had traditionally served in either the French army or navy. His father was a functionary in the navy and holder of the legion of honor. With the family's shifting of posts Robin completed his secondary education at the *lycées* of the naval towns of Bordeaux and Brest. Family tradition appeared to hold when Robin entered the *École de médecine naval* in 1855, but in 1855, but in 1858 he left to enter the *École normale supérieure*. In teaching he discovered his true *métier*. In the 1850s and 1860s he, like a generation of young intellectuals, absorbed a scientific philosophy drawn from the writings of Comte and later Darwin. It was a positivism that engendered a mania for science, a disdain for the Church, and, for some like Robin who judged the existing social and religious elites as impeding the advance of knowledge, it served as the basis for a critique of entrenched hierarchies. (10) Robin was thus prepared for the acceptance of a socialism which put little faith in politics, not out of just a Proudhonian suspicion that all political parties would betray the working class but also as a consequence of a positivist belief traceable back to Comte and Saint-Simon that politics were epiphenomenal. For such men the growth of intelligence through the various stages of the historical process was correlated, not to changes in politics, but to transformations in the forms of social activity.

It would, however, have been difficult to imagine an educational system more politicized than that of nineteenth-century France. Robin soon came into conflict with the rigid rules of the Ministry of Education in his first teaching posts at *lycées* in the Vendée and in Brest. In 1865 he

abandoned his career as a teacher and left the stultifying intellectual atmosphere of Louis Napoleon's France for Belgium. After attending the Congrès international des étudiants at Liège, Robin was befriended by Aristide Rey, teacher, freethinker and devotee of Bakunin. Robin in turn met Caesar de Paepe, the leading Belgian socialist and Eugène Hins, another freethinking academic, and with them founded the Association positiviste. (11) In the freer intellectual life of Brussels Robin gave rein to his ideas on education in a variety of articles in *Le Soir*, *Éducation moderne*, *Utilité* and *La Liberté*. The conception of education he evolved he described as "éducation intégrale." We will return to an examination of his pedagogical ideas, but for now it suffices to state that at bottom Robin held that education should not be "academic" but integrated to the working, productive life of the pupil. (12) Education was to serve the needs of the worker, not those of the state. It was out of a concern for labor and schooling that Robin affiliated in 1866 with the Brussels section of the International. He prepared the Brussels minority reports on education and women's work for the International's 1867 congress in Lausanne, and his report on integral education was adopted by the 1868 congress in Brussels. In it Robin demanded the liberation of education. The call for "freedom" of education already had a long history in France by the 1860s. Secularists sought an education free of the taint of religious teachings, Catholics sought an education free of state interference. What Robin sought was an education free of both the church and the state. It was an aspiration true to the French Proudhonian suspicion of all forms of centralization. In addition Robin's discussions with socialists led him to conclude that the question of workers' education was intimately bound up with the issue of the restriction of hours of labor. For the type of integrated, on-going education he sought, the worker would also have to be freed from economic oppression.

While in Belgium Robin married the daughter of another French political exile, Benjamin Victor Delesalle. But Robin's stay in Brussels was short-lived. The later 1860s witnessed a series of strikes across northern France and Belgium, particularly in the coal-mining areas. They were met by severe military and police repression. Following the brutal attacks on the strikers of Seraing, Belgium, in 1869, Robin signed an international protest for which he was arrested and expelled. (13) Rather than return to France he left for Switzerland, provided by the Russian émigré, Herzen, with a letter of introduction to the grand old man of revolutionary activity, Bakunin. (14) As noted above, Robin wrote for the Geneva section of the International through its periodical, *l'Égalité*. He was viewed abroad as a devoted follower of Bakunin and Bakunin's disciple James Guillaume, but it would be truer to say that they all simply shared the same hostility towards political centralization. Robin was already manifesting a prickliness that made it difficult for him to work very closely

with others. His main interests were still educational, and he was not sufficiently conspiratorial to suit the indefatigable plotter, Bakunin. (15) Yet Robin did criticize the General Council in the pages of *L'Égalité*, and at the 1869 congress of the International at Basle he voted with the Bakuninists against the centralizers associated with Marx. (16)

Robin's interest in the propaganda work in Switzerland soon flagged. Bickering and backstabbing in the exile community led him to resign the editorship of *L'Égalité*, and in February, 1870 encouraged by reports of a political awakening he returned to France. (17) In Paris he worked with Eugène Varlin and Paul LaFargue (Marx's son-in-law) in establishing sections of the International. The focus of the French socialists' efforts were in opposing the plebiscite of the summer of 1870, aimed by the government of Emile Ollivier at giving the tottering empire a new lease on life. The regime counterattacked in June by arresting Robin and thirty-seven other members of the International on the charge of belonging to a secret society. (18) The government's case was made easy because of Bakunin's clumsy penchant for unnecessary cloak and dagger exercises. He had earlier sent a code book to France — which conveniently fell into police hands — replete with code words for men such as Robin, Hins and Perron and for materials such as nitroglycerine, powder and arms. Robin was not even aware of the existence of the book — its creation he later described as a *bêtise* — but he and the others paid for its writing with jail sentences. (19)

The Empire did fall in the autumn of 1870, but its collapse was due, not to socialist activity, but to the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian war. Louis-Napoleon was captured at Sedan, and on September 4 the Republic was declared in Paris. Robin was released from Beauvais prison on September 5 and returned to Brussels for his family. Once again he was arrested, thrown into the Petits-Carmes and then expelled by Belgian officials as an undesirable. The presence of Prussian troops made it impossible to deliver him directly across the border, and he was thus sent by ship to Brest. Taking advantage of the political confusion in France, Bakunin tried to raise a revolt in Lyon in September; Robin was involved in a similar effort in Brest in October, and upon its failure he sailed for the inevitable destination of late nineteenth-century political exiles, London. (20) Initially he was befriended by Marx and in November made a member of the General Council of the International. (21) It was from London that he had to watch helplessly as the Prussians, having effectively defeated the French Army, lay siege in the winter of 1870 to the capital while in the spring the conservative Versaillais forces savagely put down the Paris Commune. And in London itself Robin was caught up in the internecine conflicts of the International.

The years 1870–1871 marked a turning point in Robin's life. It was not so much that he drifted away from politics as it was that political life

closed itself off from him. The bloody destruction of the Commune meant that the French left was once more decapitated. For a decade politics for the left in France did not exist, and there could be no question of Robin returning to Paris. In London Marx had succeeded by the fall of 1871 in at last committing the International to a specific political doctrine. This meant that the General Council had a new role, that of responding to the attacks of national governments. In short, the state was accepted by the International; its agenda now included the capture of political power. Marx set about isolating those who opposed this new tack. Thus Robin was ejected from the General Council in 1871, and in 1872 at the Hague Congress Bakunin and Guillaume were themselves expelled. Marx had won control of the movement, but only at the price of dismantling the International. To save the General Council from further anarchist penetration it was moved on Marx's suggestion to New York, and the real life of the International came to an end. (22) Nevertheless the term "socialism" had begun to assume a more specific meaning than it had in the past; its association with a disciplined, centralized party structure meant that a man like Robin increasingly viewed its adherents with distrust. In Switzerland the Jura anarchists condemned the despotism of the General Council and went their own way. Robin continued to attend the international anarchist conferences on into the 1890s, but he also found this world becoming less to his liking. He had never had much time for Bakunin's plots, and he was even more disappointed with the second generation of young activists led by Paul Brousse, who in the late 1870s launched a new campaign of *propagande par le fait*. Writing to Kropotkin in 1877 Robin signalled the end of his active political career in wistfully recalling his earlier optimism.

Little by little I lost my illusions on our numbers and our material means . . . your letter relieved me of my last illusion on the understanding that exists between active internationalists on the most essential questions. I used to think that there existed a compact group in perfect agreement, all having the same ideas of Guillaume. I used to belong to that group . . . (23)

An exile of both his country and his political persuasion Robin returned to his first love — educational reform.

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For most of the 1870s Robin lived a complicated life in London. On the one hand, he kept up his acquaintances with other anarchists such as Kropotkin and Elie and Elisée Reclus; on the other this antimilitarist found it necessary in order to eke out a living to teach French at the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich. (24) At the same time he developed his educational ideas, and by the end of the decade he found himself in the rare position (thanks to the Prévost legacy) of being able to put them into

practice. Joseph Gabriel Prévost was an old Saint-Simonian who in 1861 established a private orphanage at Cempuis in Picardy. Upon his death in 1875 he left funds for the continuation of the institution which was in turn taken over for administrative purposes in 1880 by the department of the Seine. (25) By 1878 the Third Republic had become firmly established and the threat of a monarchist or imperial restoration waned. To strengthen their position against any revival by the Right the republicans permitted the return to France of the Communards in 1880 and in the following decade, under the leadership of Jules Ferry and Paul Bert, — both positivists and anti-clericals—began the series of educational reforms aimed at establishing a free obligatory and secular system of education. (26) Ferdinand Buisson — Protestant, pacifist, and future Dreyfusard — was installed as head of primary education. James Guillaume, now having a largely abandoned politics for the quasi-official task of compiling the *Dictionnaire de pédagogie*, called on Buisson to find a place in the new republican educational experiment for his old comrade, Robin. As luck would have it, not only was Buisson the executor of the Prévost legacy, but Aristide Rey, Robin's friend from the days of exile in Belgium, was now a Paris municipal councillor and *rapporteur* of the Prévost bequest. Robin returned to France and with the support of his old-boy network was entrusted on December 11, 1880 with the supervision of L'Orphelinat Prévost de Cempuis. (27)

Robin has been called the greatest socialist educator of the nineteenth century. He certainly was unique in being both an ideologue and an administrator. To place his ideas and practices in context it is necessary to recall that there was a strong current of interest in education on the left. In 1868 the Geneva section of the International declared:

The overthrow of despotism and the abolition of permanent armies, the modification of economic relations, the separation of the church and state declared, are advances, which if accomplished in isolation can establish neither equality, nor consequently produce social order; accomplished simultaneously they can present no guarantee of stability as long as the forces of reaction have the lever of *general ignorance*, which means that all reforms will only be complete when education is universal. (28)

On the theoretical level, the left's concern for schooling could be traced back to Rousseau and Condorcet. On the practical level, as early as 1849 L'Association fraternelle des instituteurs socialistes was formed in France during the second Republic by Roland, Perrot and Lefrançais. (29) Its program was to provide the worker with an education which would not simply make him more productive but rather exalt the value of manual and intellectual pursuits for all. This interest in working-class education was rekindled in the 1860s and found a place on the agenda of all the early congresses of the International. (30)

Nineteenth-century socialists were particularly convinced of the

liberating powers of scientific knowledge. They were accordingly concerned about the growth of industrialization and the accompanying division of labor. Such changes had the effect of producing on the one hand an intellectual elite and on the other a mass of ill-educated factory "hands." (30) But the discussion of education also revealed tensions within the working-class movement. Some socialists viewed the emergence of the schooling issue as a red herring, a liberal tactic designed to draw attention away from crucial economic questions. Was it not in fact true, they argued, that it was the petite bourgeoisie who were most enamoured of the idea of individual social mobility via the classroom? And anarchists harbored the same suspicions. Bakunin's Alliance de la démocratie socialiste condemned existing forms of official education as being elitist and creating ". . . artificial inequalities, the historic products of a false, iniquitous social system". Bakunin was nevertheless of the opinion that real educational change had to await the revolution. "Improve working conditions, render to labor what is justly due to labor, and thereby give the people security, comfort and leisure. Then, believe me, they will educate themselves, they will create a larger, saner, higher civilization than this."

There was also the matter of who would do the schooling. In the main the working-class movement envisaged free, obligatory and secular education being made available to all by the state. But how, it was asked—and by the Proudhonians in particular—could one expect a capitalist state to provide the working-class with instruction appropriate to its revolutionary role? And finally there was the issue of who should be educated and in what manner. Because they felt themselves oppressed, the representatives of the working-class movement felt an innate sympathy for the school boy terrorized by the harsh master. (31) It was hoped that in the future reformed society all coercion could be ended; in the existing state the left asked that at least the sensitive development of the child's mind be respected. But this modern note of appreciation of the distinctiveness of childhood was in part countered by the stoic belief that a life of labor which dignified man required that the caprices of youth be curbed, that the struggle for equality necessitated that originality be viewed with suspicion. In the writings of Cabet, Proudhon, Corbon, Perdiguier and Martin Nadaud one finds the message reiterated that a resignation to a life of toil, to man's "natural" state, is the mark of the adult. (32) It was the emphasis on the acceptance of "natural" barriers as opposed to the artificial inequalities created by capitalism that in turn led the working-class movement to assume that boys and girls would receive different educations. Women's claim to the right of an equal education was countered by the assertion that natural laws dictated that such attempts to overcome biological destiny were futile.

The general educational concerns of the French left were shared by Robin: an acceptance of the importance of education for all, the need for the working class to be provided with instruction which would free it of a "slave" mentality, a suspicion that a stress on abstract issues cut the student off from the real world and accordingly the need for an "integrated education" in which manual and intellectual pursuits would be harmonized. (33) Where Robin differed from his colleagues was in pursuing a far more modern, in contemporaries' minds fantastic, vision of education that blended Fourier's stress on spontaneity (34) with Comte's belief in the discoverability of pedagogic laws. In a series of articles entitled "De l'enseignement intégral" which appeared in the journal *Philosophie positive* between 1869 and 1872 he sketched out the general propositions behind his work. (35) First, he declared that it was not sufficient to provide workers with an education suitable to their trade or craft. As a classically-educated bourgeois, Robin could not shake off the belief that real culture could aesthetically transcend class barriers. The workers needed a full culture to achieve their human potential and this in turn required a restriction of the hours of work if it was to be accomplished. Secondly, Robin asserted that if ideas were to be transmitted to pupils they had to have a practical application. Making education more functional would not impoverish but enrich it. The "histoire de travail," for example, by replacing orthodox national histories, would both win the interest of the worker and open up new areas of historical research. Thirdly, Robin argued that education had to be integrated in the rest of one's life. This meant that schooling was no longer to be a discrete portion of years but was to last a lifetime. (36) He envisaged a society in which diplomas would never be given because education would never end, and one in which the old would instruct the young as the role of teacher was taken over by the community. Fourthly, the development of the child's mind, asserted Robin, had to be respected. In the twentieth century Piaget was to formulate the idea that the study of cognitive development could help one to understand how children perceive the world around them in different ways at different ages. But already in the 1870s Robin, following the line taken by Comte, was maintaining that teaching could not take on a dogmatic tone until the pupil was at least twelve. (37) The child was to be regarded not as a little adult with the same thought processes but rather as one with no previous ideas or experiences. The educator's task was simply to provide the right milieu in which the child could discover knowledge and give coherence to his or her own world. And finally, Robin took seriously the question of the equal education of women. He attributed much sexual immorality to the segregation of the sexes in schools and to the suggestiveness of confessors (a popular anticlerical slur in nineteenth-century France). Co-education was therefore defended by

Robin on the grounds that it would provide girls with an equal opportunity and at the same time serve as a "moral hygiene" in defeating the licentiousness that fed on ignorance. (38)

Robin was a typical man of the left in defending the need for an integrated working-class education. He differed from most of his colleagues in combining this vision with an enthusiasm for originality and individuality which would brook no dogmatic appeals to the dictates of natural laws. The way in which his individualism distanced him from many of the leaders of the working-class movement was perhaps best evidenced by his feminist defense of the woman's right to schooling and to work. At the Lausanne congress of the International in 1867 the fifth question discussed in committee concerned women's work and education. The report to the assembly by Cuendat-Kunz of Saint Croix began with the old clichés of the family being the base of the social edifice, the woman being the "soul" of the family and her task that of bearing and raising children. Any employment outside the home was therefore labelled as "unnatural." "If the wife of the proletarian could become a deputy of the Chamber," asserted Cuendat-Kunz in what one presumes was an attempt at levity, "the worker's soup might well lack salt." (39) The meeting was then treated to an account of the sorts of specific risks run by working women in a speech by E. Chemalé of Paris. He reported that French doctors had discovered that seamstresses overexerting themselves on treadle sewing-machines had become victims of "une excitation génitale", "les habitudes les plus pernicieuse pour la santé" and accompanying ill health. The answer, of course, according to Chemalé was not to suppress the machines but rather the social system that forced women to work outside the home. (40)

The majority report of the commission was read by de Paepe of Brussels. It condemned women's work. Even to seek to improve their conditions of labor, though well motivated, would have the result "of maintaining an abnormal circumstance and of prolonging an unnatural situation." In the existing society the effect of women's work was the undercutting and forcing down of male wages, the abandonment of household duties, the condemnation of children to ill health and ignorance and the degeneration of the race. Following Michelet, de Paepe concluded that the woman was physically and intellectually inferior to man but had as her natural destiny the far higher calling of maternity.

Conforming to the laws of nature it is thus necessary to consider each woman as destined to become wife and consequently housekeeper, then mother, and consequently charged with the initial instruction of her children, and if all do not today achieve this destiny, is it necessary to hold accountable the social prejudices which lead to so many ill-matched marriages, and poverty, mother of prostitution and the progress of Malthusian mores, in a word it is necessary to hold accountable the existing social order. (41)

It was against such appeals to “natural” laws that Robin responded in a minority report co-signed by Hins and Esselin that defended the woman’s right to work. The right to work was sacred and could not, asserted Robin, be denied to anyone. (42) If women’s wages were lower than men’s, the answer was to raise them by including women in the organization of labor. If immorality resulted from women’s presence in mills and factories, it was a consequence of their low wages, not the work they carried out. If women were physically weaker, there still remained a vast range of tasks their strength was equal to and in any event such occupations should be increased with the advance of new machines. If their household tasks were onerous, socialists could look forward to the day when cooperative institutions would free the individual housewife of daily drudgery. And finally the minority report ended with the declaration that the value of work was that it provided the woman with “an independent existence”; she was the helpmate, not the servant, of her husband. It was this stress on providing the individual with the means of achieving an intellectual and economic independence that lay at the root of Robin’s thought.

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Imbued with these ideas Robin threw himself into the administration of the orphanage at Cempuis, an educational experiment which was to last from 1880 to 1894. The institution harbored, when he arrived, forty-two boys and sixteen girls, from ages eight to fourteen: by the 1890s their number increased to one hundred and eighty. Such was Robin’s enthusiasm for his pedagogic undertaking that he moved his family into the orphanage, treating the orphans as his children, his children as orphans. This was to have the sadly ironic result that while he won the affection of his charges—his most fervent disciple and biographer, Gabriel Giroud, had been placed in Cempuis in 1877—his own children turned against him. It was typical of Robin that in his zealous pursuit of equality he should suffer as a consequence of his very success.

Our knowledge of the sort of education offered at Cempuis by Robin comes mainly from the accounts left by Giroud and the reports of the *Bulletin de l’Orphélinat de Cempuis* (later entitled *Éducation intégral*) which was produced by the students themselves. (43) The printing by them of the *Bulletin* was a good example of Robin’s attempt at creating an integrated education which combined manual and intellectual pursuits, the sciences and the arts. Robin was obviously much influenced by Fourier’s idea of “la papillonne”: the belief that creativity was best served by permitting the individual to move at will from physical to moral to intellectual tasks. Underlying Robin’s work was the assumption that in the case of children in particular their first education had to be more or less spontaneous with

knowledge garnered by chance. Of course in practice Robin was in control of the environment in which his pupils developed their minds, and he, like Rousseau's tutor in *Émile*, had to wrestle with the problem of how one forces others to be free. In the intellectual realm, for example, Robin loathed formal examinations and even protested to the minister of education against the stress placed on spelling. (44) The question of orthography had earlier been debated in the International with Proudhonians like Tolain and Chemalé defending the sanctity of French while Robin hailed the move to create a more rational language, indeed even an international language. (45) Robin did not want to subject his charges to a discipline that would make education repugnant; rather he sought to woo their interest by providing telescopes for astronomy, instruments for music and record books for meteorological observations. But Robin did have his obsessions: convinced of the value of stenography, he had all his students study the subject.

Robin balanced the intellectual content of the Cempuis curriculum with physical activities. There was a long tradition of an interest by the left in France in dance, music and gymnastics. (46) Robin carried this on in the hopes of inculcating both grace and sociability. Such, he believed, had been the purpose of folkdances, but the modern dance had been reduced to a mere "exhibition érotique." Exercising, cycling and country walks supplemented the dance at Cempuis, and most importantly Robin was among the first in France to organize "bains de mer" for his students at a "collège de vacances." (47) This interest in physical activity was extended by Robin to quite remarkable lengths with the avowed purpose of discovering the relationship between physiological and intellectual development. Not surprisingly, tobacco was forbidden and meals carefully analyzed. Pupils were even obliged to present themselves at the privies at least once a day and provide, what in pre-Freudian innocence was described as "une matière louable." (48) Robin spelled out this interest in cataloguing and measuring his pupils in a series of articles on "L'anthropométrie à l'école." Following Comte's interest in phrenology and assisted by Dr. Topinard of the Société d'anthropologie, Robin had almost every aspect of his charges measured—length of arm, lung capacity, pulse, sight, etc—in the hopes that such information would be of some use to the hygienist and educator. (49) As far as one can tell such observations served no practical purpose, but they dramatically reveal the curious way in which Robin sought to balance his Fourierist love for spontaneity with a Comtean hankering for scientific certainty.

The fact that Robin had both sexes exercise, even swim together, was one of the earliest excuses used by conservatives for attacking his control of Cempuis. Robin's belief in co-education went beyond simply providing girls with the same education as boys. (50) His male pupils, in addition to working in the shops, the laundry and the print works, were given

lessons in cooking and sewing. Females, argued Robin, should in turn have access to the education offered males. If the sexes did in fact differ intellectually, liberty demanded that such differing aptitudes be allowed to surface naturally in the course of life. Such aptitudes could not be demarcated by law. Moreover, women needed the same basic skills as men, and co-education produced a higher morality based on confidence and freedom while ignorance led to unhealthy thoughts. (51) It was characteristic of Robin that he backed up his claim that co-education did not, as his critics charged, lead to sexual precocity by citing anthropometric records that showed the voices of the pupils of Cempuis did not change as early as those of adolescents outside. (52)

The question of the sort of morality taught at Cempuis was to be the eventual cause of Robin's dismissal. As far as the discipline of the students was concerned, Robin sought to avoid recourse to traditional moral injunctions. The "collège de vacances" was used as a carrot to ensure good behavior, and fêtes with popular songs by radicals such as Béranger, Pierre Dupont and Lachambeaudie were employed to keep spirits high. (53) Some behavior, however, was not tolerated. True to his pacificism and perhaps in restitution for the years of teaching at the Woolwich Military Academy, Robin forbade his pupils to play soldiers. Nor was the Marseillaise sung; in its place Robin taught his charges the "Marseillaise de la paix." Religious teachings were also prohibited, and in their place a "morale positive" was inculcated. To the attacks of clericals Giroud was later to respond, "God was not denied at Cempuis, he was ignored!" (54)

During the fourteen years that Robin ran Cempuis he was under intermittent attack by the clerical right. The thought of a well-known radical, positivist and freethinker having at his mercy the inhabitants of an orphanage fulfilled the fears and fantasies of the respectable. In 1883 when it was discovered that Robin had written in England a birth control tract entitled *Le secret de bonheur*, the prefect of the Seine, M. Oustry, asked for his resignation. (55) Robin managed to withstand this attack and a similar onslaught in 1892. In 1894 he was once more subjected to violent criticism in the right wing press, in particular in *La libre parole* edited by the antisemite, Edouard Drumont. He likened Cempuis to a "porcherie municipale" and accused Robin of maintaining a ". . . système pornographique de la coéducation des sexes. . .", inculcating "internationalisme" and denigrating religion. (56) This time the campaign against Robin succeeded. He had originally been installed by a government of anti-clerical republicans which sought support on the Left; by 1894 a moderate government was in power which was confident enough about the stability of the Republic that it could defy the Radicals and rely on the aid of both the Ralliés—those Catholics who at the behest of Leo XIII "rallied" to the Republic in order to defend the interests of the Church—and

the traditional Right. Robin was not defended by his Minister. Moreover, the fresh attacks on Robin coincided with a series of anarchist outrages. Anti-anarchist laws were passed by the Assembly on July 18, 1894, and on August 31 Robin was relieved of his duties. Drumont was jubilant, but his victory was not complete. Though opposed by the prefect, Robin was defended in the Conseil général de la Seine by Jean Colly and others and eventually awarded a pension of four thousand francs.

* * *

Following his dismissal in 1894, Robin continued to write occasional articles on education, but he shifted the focus of his attention to propagandizing in favor of birth control. What can one conclude about his place in the history of educational thought? His importance was due to his success in drawing together strands from a variety of competing educational traditions: from liberal educational theorists such as Condorcet a concern for a schooling of the masses, from the positivists an enthusiasm for science and a search for causal laws which would make facts meaningful and liberate man from superstition, from the representatives of the labor movement from Proudhon to Corbon a preoccupation with the political and occupational needs of the working class, and from libertarians from Rousseau to Fourier a shifting of attention from education's content to its method and a corresponding attack on rote-learning, memory-training and passive acceptance which ignored individual needs. Robin's argument was in turn necessarily multi-faceted. He was a critic of both the official educational system of his time and of the increasingly ineffective critique made of it by the left. Socialists, swept up in the campaign of the 1880s against clerical involvement in education, tended to be as faithful as radical republicans in adhering to the liberal faith that a growth in state education would naturally lead to a more articulate public and a more responsible democracy. Some of the left did recognize the power of the state to use the educational system to produce a docile working class, but Robin was among the first to suggest that it was therefore necessary to dismantle the existing system—or create an alternative to it—if the goal was to create an education which embodied the interests of the working class.

Robin's radicalism prevented him from having any immediate impact on the development of French national education. But the importance of his experiment was recognized at the time, and visitors from as far afield as England, Germany and Russia came to observe his methods. (57) Moreover, Cempuis was to provide inspiration for Francisco Ferrer's "New School" campaign in Spain and to serve as a model for later libertarian educational undertakings in twentieth-century France such as Sebastian Faure's private orphanage, La Ruche, at Patis-Rambouillet and Madaleine Vernet's L'Avenir Social at Neuilly-Plaisance. (58)

Similarly, Fernand Pelloutier was to use Robin's term "integral education" to describe the efforts of the Bourses du travail in the 1890s to provide an education by the working class for the working class. (59) Perhaps the most interesting questioning to be asked—what was the actual impact of Robin's method of teaching on his pupils?—is the most difficult to answer. We do know at least that in 1881 only one pupil a year received the "certificate d'études" whereas by 1893 the number had increased to twenty. Moreover some of Robin's charges went on to agricultural and normal schools, and Gabriel Giroud was to become one of the most active birth control propagandists of the twentieth century. (60) In the long term, however, Robin's importance lies in the fact that he was not a mere historical curiosity but a pioneer in coming to grips with issues in working-class education that remain today the subject of lively debate. First, Robin anticipated the concern later expressed for the "cultural hegemony" of the bourgeoisie by Gramsci and like him recognized the need of providing the revolutionary class with a revolutionary culture. (61) Secondly, Robin recognized as did twentieth-century feminists the important role education could play in reproducing sexual stereotypes and accordingly the duty of the radical to open up opportunities, not just for upper and middle-class women but in particular for working-class women. Thirdly, Robin developed a model of the child's growth of knowledge which in its stress on spontaneity and optimism looked back to Fourier's work and foreshadowed that of Piaget and A. S. Neill. It would be silly to pretend that Robin was not a man of his time and subject to some curious nineteenth century obsessions; his penchant for measuring facial angles and concern for feces makes this all too clear. But the very ambiguities and ambivalences revealed by this cursory overview of Robin's early life are eloquent reminders of the tensions which fueled much of the social criticism of the nineteenth century. Here was an adult who claimed to understand the functioning of a child's mind, a bourgeois who lectured on the educational interests of the worker, a man who sought to articulate the needs of women, a moralist who called for greater sexual freedom, a socialist who held that the revolution had to follow moral—not economic—change, and, final irony, a libertarian who only managed to carry out his educational experiments within the confines of a state institution. In parading these apparent contradictions there is no intention of denigrating Robin's intentions or activities. On the contrary, only by understanding the way in which he turned the preoccupations of the French Left to the purposes of creating an original educational model can one fully appreciate his importance.

NOTES

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1. See for example Félix Ponteil, *Histoire de l'enseignement en France* (Paris, 1966) and Antoine Prost, *Histoire de l'enseignement en France 1800-1967* (Paris, 1968).
2. See for example John W. Bush, "Education and Social Status: The Jesuit College in the Early Third Republic," *French Historical Studies*, (1975): 125-140; Robert Gildea, "Education in Nineteenth-Century Brittany, Ille-et-Vilaine, 1800-1914," *Oxford Review of Education*, (1976): 215-230; Pierre Zind, *L'enseignement religieux dans l'instruction primaire publique en France de 1850 à 1873* (Lyon, 1971).
3. The standard biography of Robin is Gabriel Giroud, *Paul Robin* (Paris, 1937); see also Maurice Dommanget, *Paul Robin* (Paris, 1951) which forms the basis for a chapter in Dommanget, *Les grands socialistes et l'éducation de Platon à Lenine* (Paris, 1970); and Jean Maitron, *Histoire du mouvement anarchiste en France, 1880-1914* (Paris, 1951), pp. 320-324.
4. Robert L. Hoffman, *Revolutionary Justice: The Social and Democratic Theory of P.-J. Proudhon* (Chicago, 1972), pp. 327 ff.
5. David Stafford, *From Anarchism to Reformism: A Study of the Political Activities of Paul Brousse within the First International and the French Socialist Movement 1870-90* (Toronto, 1971), pp. 15-16.
6. M. Rubel and M. Manale, *Marx Without Myth* (Oxford, 1975), pp. 240ff. and James Guillaume, *L'Internationale* (Paris, 1905), vol. I, pp. 76 ff.
7. Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, vol. I, pp. 248-249.
8. A. Lehning ed., *Archives Bakhounine* (Leiden, 1963), vol. I, part II, appendix; Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, vol. II, 194; Jacques Freymond, ed., *La première internationale* (Geneva, 1962), vol. II. pp. 206-210.
9. Unless otherwise indicated the details on Robin's life are drawn from Giroud, *Robin*, pp. 1-14.
10. From Comte Robin drew both a belief in the importance of education for all and a concern that overspecialization be overcome, by establishing relationships between different sorts of knowledge. But Comte complained of the lack of universal education out of a fear of disorder whereas Robin hoped that education would be a force for social change. See Gabriel Compayré, *The History of Pedagogy* (London, 1913, first ed. 1887), pp. 529-531; W. M. Simon, *European Positivism in the Nineteenth Century* (Ithaca, 1963); D. G. Charlton, *Positivist Thought in France During the Second Empire* (Oxford, 1959).
11. The university congresses at Liège in 1865 and Brussels in 1867 marked the high point of Proudhonian influence in Belgium. See Jacques Droz, *Histoire générale du socialisme* (Paris, 1972), vol. I, 535-539.
12. On the "cours populaires" given in Belgium by Robin and others see C. Oukhow, *Documents relatifs à l'histoire de la première internationale en Wallonie* (Louvain, 1967), pp. xviii, xxix, 29.
13. Oukhow, *Documents*, pp. 190-193.
14. Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, Vol. I, p. 182.
15. On Robin's character see Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, vol. II, p. 226, 251; Lehning, *Archives* vol., VI, p. 273; Jean Grave, *Quarante ans de propagande anarchiste*, (Paris, 1973), pp. 342-343.
16. Freymond, *L'Internationale*, vol. II, pp. 15, 34, 73.
17. Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, vol. I, pp. 252, 269ff.

18. Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, vol. I, p. 285; vol. II, p. 29.
19. Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, vol. I, pp. 245-246.
20. Giroud, *Robin*, p. 22.
21. Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, Vol. II, pp. 197-198.
22. Miklos Molnár, *Le déclin de la première internationale: La conférence de Londres de 1871* (Paris, 1963).
23. Robin to Kropotkin, March 27, 1877 in Stafford, *Anarchism*, p. 72. Robin did attend the August 4-6, 1877 anarchist congress at St. Imier. See Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, vol. IV, p. 223; Max Nettlau, *La Première Internationale en Espagne, 1868-1888* (Dordrecht, 1969), pp. 295, 307.
24. Giroud, *Robin*, p. 22.
25. *Bulletin; Orphélinat Prévost* (November 1882).
26. Sanford Elwitt, *The Making of the Third Republic: Class and Politics in France, 1868-1884* (Baton Rouge, 1975), pp. 170ff.
27. Giroud, *Robin*, pp. 25-34.
28. Freymond, *L'Internationale*, vol. I, p. 326.
29. Georges Duveau, *La pensée ouvrière sur l'éducation pendant la seconde république* (Paris, 1948), pp. 94-95.
30. Marx did not provide a full analysis of education but the tenth point of the *Communist Manifesto* called for "Free education for all children in public schools. Abolition of child factory labor in its present form. Combination of education with industrial production, etc." In *Capital* by an examination of the workings of the Factory Acts in England he optimistically concluded that such a system was in part already emerging. The Acts ". . . proved for the first time the possibility of combining education and gymnastics with manual labour, and, consequently, of combining manual labour with education and gymnastics. The factory inspectors soon found out by questioning the schoolmasters, that the factory children, although receiving only one half the education of the regular day scholars, yet learnt quite as much and often more. . . . From the factory system budded, as Robert Owen has shown us in detail, the germ of the education of the future, an education that will, in the cases of every child over a given age, combine productive labour with instruction and gymnastics, not only as one of the methods of adding to the efficiency of production, but as the only method of producing fully developed human beings." In attacking the German Socialists demand for elementary education to be provided for by the state Marx turned to America for a model: "Defining by a general law the expenditures of the elementary schools, the qualifications of the teaching staff, the branches of instruction, etc., and, as is done in the United States, supervising the fulfillment of these legal specifications by state inspectors, is a very different thing from appointing the state as the educator of the people! Government and church should rather be equally excluded from any influence on the school." See *Capital* (London, 1967), vol. I, 483-484; Saul K. Padover, *Karl Marx on Education, Women and Children* (New York, 1977), pp. 32-33, 40-41.
31. On Bakunin see A. Lehning, ed., *Michael Bakunin: Selected Writings* (New York, 1973), p. 174 and Sam Dolgoff, ed. *Bakunin on Anarchy* (New York, 1972), p. 119; for working-class views of children see Duveau, *La pensée*, p. 95.
32. Even Bakunin in the "Revolutionary Catechism" spoke of primary education being necessarily authoritarian. "As the child grows older, authority will give way to more and more liberty, so that by adolescence he will be completely free and will forget how in childhood he had to submit unavoidably to authority." Dolgoff, *Bakunin*, p. 95; cf.

- p. 375. See also Etienne Cabet, *Voyage en Icarie* (Paris, 1848), Anthyme Corbon, *De l'enseignement professionnel* (Paris, 1859), Agricol Perdiguier, *Le livre du compagnonnage* (Paris, 1857), Martin Nadaud, *Histoire des classes ouvrières en Angleterre* (Paris, 1872), P. J. Proudhon, *L'Idée générale de la révolution au XIX^e siècle* (Paris, 1851).
33. On the parallel discussion in Germany at a slightly later date see J. P. Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg* (London, 1966), vol. I, pp. 388-396; James M. Olson, "Radical Social Democracy and School Reform in Wilhelmian Germany," *History of Education Quarterly*, 17 (1977): 3-16; Nicolas Jacobs, "Workers' Education: The German Social Democratic Party School in Berlin, 1906-1914," *History Workshop*, 5 (1979): 179-187.
 34. David Zeldin, *The Educational Ideas of Charles Fourier* (London, 1969). Robin also cited Rabelais and Rousseau as precursors.
 35. *La philosophie positive*, V (1869), 271-297; VII (1870), 109-126; IX (1872), 123-138. These articles were republished as *Sur l'enseignement intégral* (Paris, 1872).
 36. Robin, *Sur l'enseignement*, part III.
 37. Paul Arbousse-Bastide, *La doctrine de l'éducation universelle dans la philosophie d'Auguste Comte* (Paris, 1957), 2 vols. On the slow growth in France of a child psychology sensitive to the needs of the infant see Theodore Zeldin, *France, 1848-1945* (Oxford, 1973), vol. I, pp. 322-326.
 38. Robin, *Sur l'enseignement*, part II.
 39. Freymond, *L'Internationale*, Vol. I, p. 213.
 40. Freymond, *L'Internationale*, vol. I, pp. 221-223.
 41. Freymond, *L'Internationale*, Vol. I, pp. 217-218.
 42. Freymond, *L'Internationale*, vol. I, pp. 220-221.
 43. Gabriel Giroud, *Cempuis* (Paris, 1900). Giroud was to become Robin's son-in-law.
 44. Dommanget, *Robin*, p. 26
 45. Freymond, *L'Internationale*, vol. I, p. 139.
 46. Duveau, *La pensée*, p. 94.
 47. Dommanget, *Robin*, p. 17.
 48. *L'Éducation intégrale* (March-April 1891), 20.
 49. Paul Robin, *L'Anthropométrie à l'école* (Cempuis, 1887): Paul Topinard, an important pioneer in anthropometric surveying, was the author of *L'Anthropologie* (Paris, 1876) and *Éléments d'anthropologie générale* (Paris, 1885).
 50. *L'Éducation intégrale* (September-October 1892), 124-125 and see also Robin, *Sur l'enseignement*, part III, p. 13.
 51. For a rare laudatory account of Robin's activities see Dr. Henri Fischer, *De l'éducation sexuelle* (Paris, 1903), pp. 175-6, 180.
 52. Dommanget, *Robin*, p. 32.
 53. *Bulletin: Orphélinat de Cempuis* (November 1882), p. 9.
 54. Giroud, *Cempuis*, p. 178 and see also *L'Éducation intégrale* (September-October 1891), 71.
 55. Giroud, *Robin*, p. 208.
 56. For the attack on Robin see Giroud, *Robin*, p. 88; Giroud, *Cempuis*, pp. 218ff; *Journal Officiel, Chambre des députés* (November 10, 1894), pp. 1793 ff.
 57. On English visitors see *National Reformer* (July 20, 1884), 58.
 58. On Robin and Ferrer see Joan Connelly Ullman, *The Tragic Week: A Study of Anticlericalism in Spain 1875-1912* (Cambridge, Mass., 1968), p. 94 and on the general issue of radical education see Caroline P. Boyd, "The Anarchists and Education in

- Spain, 1869-1909," *Journal of Modern History*, 48 (1976): 125-172 and on later anarchist, educational experiments in France see Maitron, *Histoire*, pp. 325 ff.
59. Fernand Pelloutier, *Histoire des bourses du travail* (Paris, 1946, first ed. 1901), pp. 178ff.; Alan B. Spitzer, "Anarchy and Culture: Fernand Pelloutier and the Dilemma of Revolutionary Syndicalism," *International Review of Social History*, 8 (1963): 379-388; Jacques Julliard, *Fernand Pelloutier et les origines du syndicalisme d'action directe* (Paris, 1971), pp. 254 ff.
60. On the pupils of Cempuis see *Journal Officiel*, pp. 1795 ff.
61. Quintin Hoare and G. N. Smith, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci* (New York, 1971), pp. 24-44 and see also Georges Sorel, *The Illusion of Progress* in J. L. Stanley ed., *From George Sorel* (Oxford, 1976), p. 189.